THEOSOPHY

The Divine Wisdom

by

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The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875, jointly by Madame H. P. Blavatsky, a Russian, and Col. H. S. Olcott, an American, assisted by others. In 1879, the world Headquarters was shifted to Bombay and later in 1882 to Adyar, Madras. It is an international organization with membership which has included 56 countries, belonging to any religion in the world or to none. They are united by their approval of the Objects of the Theosophical Society; by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions; and by their desire to study truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief but of a common search and aspiration for Truth.

They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its

condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true Theosophist.

The three declared objects of the Theosophical Society are:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.

2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.

3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

Col. H. S. Olcott was the first President, followed by Dr. Annie Besant (1907-1933), Dr. G. S. Arundale (1934-45), and Mr. C. Jinarajadasa (1946-1953), Mr. N. Sri Ram being the present President of this international body.

The word "Theosophy" is defined neither in the constitution of the Theosophical Society nor in any official document. It is evidently intended that each one interested should discover for himself what it is or of what nature it is. There have been persons

throughout the ages who have embarked on this quest, and what has been recorded out of their findings or teachings is available for our study. A person can find out what Theosophy is partly from the thoughts and writings which have come down from ancient times, partly by studying the modern Theosophical works by H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant and others, and partly by his own earnest meditations and enquiry.

In the very word "Theosophy" there is some indication of the direction in which to search. Theosophy or Theo-sophia may be translated as the "Divine Wisdom". Some people may prefer to call it Spiritual Wisdom. But then, what is Wisdom and what is spiritual? Surely wisdom is not knowledge. A person may have a great deal of information or even knowledge in a well-ordered form, yet may err greatly in his judgments, be thoroughly wrong in his evaluations, and in his actions be blatantly unwise. Knowledge can be used for an ill

or for a good purpose. The mere possession of knowledge is like the possession of wealth, of resources and capacities, which can be used either for good ends or for ends wrong and harmful. It is easy to find persons who are learned, yet are confused in their thinking and even petty and ill-advised in their behaviour and actions. Wisdom is something altogether other than knowledge. It has a quality superior to and different from ordinary knowledge. What is this quality and how does it manifest itself? This calls for a deep enquiry.

I would suggest a somewhat simple approach to the question. Wisdom lies in action in accordance with Truth, the truth of all things in life. When life is of one sort or nature, if we act in a way which contradicts that truth, we are acting in ignorance or illusion and are bound to come to grief. All illusions must inevitably mislead and fail. They will eventually be blown up by the facts of existence.

We usually interpret action as our outer physical deeds, what we perform outwardly in relation to persons and things, what is capable of observation by others. But we have to understand this word "action" in a much truer and more comprehensive sense. Thinking is action, feeling is action, in addition to the outer visible acts we may perform. If we understand action as the action of the whole nature of man, the functioning of his whole being, including the physical aspect of it, then if a man acts, that is to say, thinks, feels, acts in a way which expresses or does not conflict with the truth of things, he is wise; but if he acts according to various ideas which do not correspond to the actuality of things or harmonize with the basic process of himself or of the universe, he is wrong. This is common sense.

Next arises the question: What do we call Truth? Here again we come up against a question which is exceedingly difficult to

answer. To know the Truth requires going into things very, very deeply. What things? Into all things that actually exist or take place, as distinguished from what is merely imagined or projected out of one's hopes and wishes. Whatever actually exists at any level represents Truth in its own way and measure. But if something is merely imagined, if there is a concept which is just a projection, an hallucination or dream, it may not correspond to the actuality of things.

All that exists can be placed in four simple categories or divisions. First, there is matter, in whatever form. There is the world of matter, and it is this world with which, in its physical aspect, modern Science is concerned. The facts that have been discovered by Science, the laws which connect those facts, all that is the knowledge of the world of matter. There are the forces of which that world is composed, forces which form the very matrix or substance of matter, as

well as the forces which seem apart from matter and operate in the field of matter. We might take matter and force as belonging to the same category. Knowledge of their nature and properties is part of the totality of knowledge. To understand Truth in this outermost aspect of it obviously requires a mind which is objective, which confronts the facts, which does not inject into the explanation of facts ideas that are not inherent in those facts, which are subjectively generated apart from them. This objectivity makes the mind precise, accurate and logical. All the qualities which distinguish the scientist are needed by all of us to comprehend Truth in whatever aspect. They are needed also to conduct our own lives rightly. Willingness to confront facts and exclude whatever is irrelevant in dealing with them are qualities which must shape thought on all matters.

In the vast expanse of matter we find there is life in innumerable forms. Life

appears like a patch on what we call inorganic, inert matter, but perhaps actually there is life in every individual thing. At any rate such is the view of Occultism, as taught by the ancient Teachers. It is a view which has profound implications and cannot be dismissed as impossible. Life has its own laws for its functioning, growth and development. Also, it evolves. Perhaps matter also evolves—we need not go into that point here—though to our limited sight it does not. Life pulsates, expands, reproduces and evolves; it has these and other extraordinary qualities. The study of life or knowledge of the nature of life is an important part of the Theosophical wisdom.

Then in addition to life, there is consciousness and intelligence. Wherever there is life, in however insignificant a form, there is consciousness. Every living organism is conscious in one degree or another, but in man consciousness rises to grades and functions in ways in which life in other

forms does not. Life has to coincide with the organism, flow along with its processes, limiting itself to the organism, whereas consciousness and intelligence can transcend the organism. Our minds can imagine and feel various things, go off into realms quite outside the limits of physical life.

Then, there is a fourth category, not readily perceived, under which we might include all that is truly spiritual, that is, all that manifests the nature of the Spirit. We know little about this Principle, which H. P. Blavatsky speaks of as omnipresent and incomprehensible to our limited minds. If we imagine it, try to form a certain concept of it, that imagination or concept arises from ideas which already exist in our minds. My mind is made up in a certain way because of my life experiences: I have been born an Indian and a Hindu; I have lived in a particular family; I have been influenced by my environment; I have had

a certain type of education and associates. All these together have conditioned my mind, and inevitably any ideas I form are moulded by the facts and factors that have entered deeply into my composition. A concept is a projection, and it is projected from the ground of ideas already formed by certain forces operating in association with them. The picture or image is created by the mind according to its tendencies and ideas; so conceptualization is not the way to arrive at absolute truth. Moreover, the concept of something is not that something. A concept of God or the Godhead is not the living God. Therefore, to know the truth there must be nothing in the mind from which to project. The consciousness has to be purged of all its contents. In that condition what is reflected is what exists, that is, Truth. There are people who have attained that condition and have discovered what lies beyond the mind as we understand it, that is, what belongs to

this fourth category which has a nature that is unconditioned.

Therefore, Truth has all these aspects: matter, life, consciousness, and what lies beyond that consciousness. In this series consciousness is the one thing, substance let us call it, in which and through which we perceive all the others. Matter, the material form, the material world, are all known only in the consciousness. How do we know that there is something spiritual, a spiritual condition or principle? We know it also in the consciousness, but in its pure unmodified state. Consciousness has the extraordinary nature of being able to turn into itself, as well as look outside itself. Its action is both objective and subjective. When it is able to perceive the truth within itself, it knows truth in its spiritual and subjective aspects. When it looks out it perceives the phenomena, the objects of the material world. And life partakes both of the nature of matter and of consciousness,

because the form in which life dwells, through which it functions, is composed of material substances, but life has also qualities of consciousness, such as sensation, will, etc. It is only a consciousness capable of knowing what exists at all levels, in all its aspects, that can embrace the totality of truth. It becomes then one with the Truth and that totality is a unity within itself.

When the consciousness is sensitive with a sensitiveness which is its own pure nature, is awake in all its sections and layers, from the highest Spirit to the lowest matter, it is only then that it can know the true nature of the whole, of what pervades that whole as well as the subtlety and complexity of the processes which constitute that whole. The consciousness that embraces the truth completely acts in accordance with it; in other words, the truth acts through the person and then he is wise. But even without knowing the universal process, all the facts of existence at the different levels, if a

man is pure in mind, heart and body, empty of self, he will attain unconsciously a perfect relationship with the whole and will be able to act with an intuition of the truth which will guide him unerringly in all that he does. Birds, animals and insects have instincts which are unerring for their limited purposes. Man, who is much more developed, is also capable of such an instinct, but operating more universally and in a more significant manner. That instinct we might call Intuition. In him the Intuition is now suppressed and confused by various activities of a mind affected by very many factors, its hopes, fears and so on. The mind is subject to attractions and repulsions, which distort its nature. Even at its best its mode of action gives only a partial view. But there can be a different kind of action by a consciousness which belongs to the whole nature of man, subtler, deeper, swifter, more harmonious and more in contact with the truth. Such action is possible only to

a mind which has reverted to its original unmodified state.

So we may say that Theosophy is a knowledge of truth in its essence, of the heart of truth, of that nature or Principle which is present in all that exists and also in the heart of man, making it possible for him to know the truth of everything in a flash.

This wisdom is described as divine. What is divine? Let me attempt a definition. The divine is that which has a quality or nature to which the mind and heart can surrender itself without any reservation. A person may say: "I surrender myself." He may go to a temple, prostrate himself on the ground. But this is not real surrender. There is much reservation behind such so-called surrender, many expectations and wants. Surrender is neither physical nor mental, it has to be surrender by the whole being. It is only when one surrenders or gives himself completely, without asking for

anything, whether in love or devotion, that he can know or, rather, experience that which is Divine.

There are different possible approaches to what Theosophy is. The longer one studies it, the less easy it is to define it, because it is the universal Truth. How can we define a Wisdom which belongs to life, therefore lives and breathes, in which there are the depths which belong to what we call the Spirit, which is subtler than the subtlest mind can encompass, whose every movement is meaningful with the meaning of that Spirit?

The Truth, or the Wisdom, cannot be known except by a mind which is *completely* open to it. It is only when the mind is clear of every idea, every colouring wish, every element of self, that it can discover the Truth. That truth is reflected in such a mind; there is no need to go after it. The truth then comes to the person. He discovers it in his heart. It is only in

absolute freedom of mind and heart that truth in its absoluteness can shine and manifest itself. Therefore, in the Theosophical Society we try to maintain that freedom which is like an open way or space. That is the reason why Theosophy is left free of all definitions, all limitations.

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